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ABSTRACT

A clinically-based innovative principalship program developed by the University of Alabama is described and selected elements are highlighted to illustrate potential problems in establishing and conducting clinical administrator preparation programs. University-based issues discussed include unclear knowledge base, lack of program structure and coherence, and the art-and-science concept of the professor. School-based issues discussed are student residency, district-level professional development, and sponsoring potential leadership. It is suggested that future clinical programs can be more effective if state boards of education, universities, local school administrators, and administrator professional associations address the following policy issues: (1) provide induction and continuing development for administrators; (2) develop a statewide administrator preparation plan; (3) develop consensus regarding the knowledge base; and (4) explore expanded concepts of the professorate. (7 references) (SI)

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Problems In Developing Clinically-Based Administrator Preparation Programs

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Problems In Developing Clinically-Based Administrator Preparation Programs

The educational reform movement of the 1980's, which was stimulated by the *Nation at Risk Report* (1982), focused initially on conditions within the public schools, but soon brought into question the preparation of teachers (Holmes Group, 1986; Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy, 1986). More recently, the way in which school administrators are prepared has been the focus of scrutiny. The reports of several national commissions (National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration,1987; Subcommittee on Administrator Preparation of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE), 1988; National Policy Board, 1989) advocate major reforms of administrator preparation programs. One such reform recommendation is that the preparation of school administrators be increasingly clinical in nature.

Administrator preparation programs have traditionally included a clinical component in the form of an internship for those degree candidates who did not have prior administrative experience. The current reforms, however, advocate clinical practice which is more directly integrated with the substance and structure of preparation programs. The goal of these clinical recommendations is to help potential administrators learn the "craft" of administration by focusing on the development of administrative skills.

Attempts to provide a more substantial clinical experience in administrator preparation programs raise fundamental questions about the nature of the uni-

versity-school district relationship, the scope and sequence of preparation experiences, the role of the professor, as well as the role of the student in the preparation program. This paper will describe a clinically-based innovative principalship program developed by The University of Alabama and discuss problems associated with its clinical component. Policy considerations which should be addressed in developing future clinical programs will also be presented.

The University of Alabama Innovative Principalship Preparation Program

In the summer of 1987, The University of Alabama introduced an innovative principalship preparation program. This program, initially funded by a grant by the Danforth Foundation, attempted to respond to a critical shortage of certified school administrators in the State of Alabama. Projections indicated that during the next five to seven years over half of the school administrators in the State of Alabama would be eligible for retirement. This comes at a time when University enrollments in administrator preparation programs have declined, largely due to the State of Alabama's policy which allows school districts to claim master's-level reimbursement only for teachers who earn their master's degree in a teaching field.

The University's Innovative Principalship Preparation Program consists of two six credit hour seminars taken full-time over the course of one complete summer term on campus and an integrated, semester or year-long clinical experience in a local school. The summer course work is organized around the series of approximately eighty different modules which deal with the skills and competencies required for an entry-level school principal. Modules range from one hour up to an entire day, depending upon their scope and importance within the entire curriculum. University faculty as well as practicing school administrators deliver

lectures, critique the analysis of case materials, supervise small group discussions, and offer demonstrations on wide-ranging topics such as the latest computer scheduling programs and techniques for clinical supervision.

After the summer's academic experience the students spend up to two hundred and fifty hours as a student intern in a local school under the guidance of a practicing school administrator who serves as their professional mentor. A University adjunct faculty member coordinates the internship experience and brings the students together regularly to debrief their experience and discuss common problems and solutions to those problems. A mentor training program is provided in which the site-based mentors for each intern learn about the intended purpose of the internship as well as discuss ways in which they can assure that the internship is a positive learning experience. Interns are expected to keep a weekly log. In addition, they are given a workbook which contains a variety of tasks they must complete and skills which they must demonstrate during the course of the internship. These tasks and skills are linked to specific instructional modules which comprised the students' summer academic experience and are designed to help students develop and explore linkages between the conceptual knowledge learned at The University and the practice of school administration.

The program was originally designed to be a cooperative endeavor between The University of Alabama and school districts whose superintendents would nominate and sponsor an outstanding teacher to participate in the program. It was anticipated that, due to the lack of qualified administrator candidates, local school superintendents would be willing to identify an outstanding teacher who aspired to the principalship and provide paid release time for the teacher to participate in a full-time administrative internship. It seemed reasonable to assume that superintendents and their local boards would be willing to groom their own

administrators from within their ranks and that a locally sponsored, full-time administrative internship would benefit the school district by providing additional administrative assistance while affording the administrative intern a rich learning experience.

Although this program is now in its third year, and by all standards has been judged to be quite successful, several modifications have been made in the original design of the program, especially insofar as the linkages between The University and the local schools and the academic preparation and the internship are concerned. These modifications underscore some potentially fundamental issues which universities and local school districts must overcome in order to enhance the clinical nature of administrator preparation programs. Throughout the remaining sections of this paper, selected elements of The University of Alabama program will be highlighted to illustrate potential problems in establishing and conducting clinical administrator preparation programs. Although it may appear that the program is not achieving its intended purposes or lacks certain desirable instructional attributes, the author wishes to state that he believes the program to be, on the whole, well designed and effective. Modifications in the program will continue to be made as The University and area schools address selected issues. These issues, which will be discussed, are both university and school district based.

University-Based Issues

Unclear Knowledge Base

There is no clear consensus in the literature or in professional practice about the nature of the knowledge base for the preparation of educational administrators. The recent *Handbook of Research on Educational Administration* (Boyan,

1988) documents well the growth over the last four decades in knowledge which is applicable to the preparation of school administrators. Nonetheless there is no agreement within the profession about what administrators need to know to be successful in their roles. Many preparation programs are structured around job functions of the administrator, such as budgeting and finance, school community relations, facility development and maintenance, and curriculum development and supervision. Other programs focus on administrative roles, such as principal, supervisor, and superintendent. Still others are more generic in focus, dealing with the application of conceptual frameworks from sociology, psychology, philosophy, management, and law to the practice of administration. It is even more common to see certain elements of all three perspectives included in various patterns within individual preparation programs, even though no two programs will be similar nor highlight the same content. The issue here is not uniformity of program design, but consensus regarding elements which should make up a sound preparation program.

The lack of a coherent knowledge base is further complicated by the fact that there is no consensus about the degree to which preparation programs should focus more on general theories and concepts or assist the administrator in the development of job-specific skills. Much has been described in the recent literature about the "craft" of educational administration (Blumberg, 1984) and the need for administrators to develop job-related skills in addition to knowledge about their roles and functions. The development of skills requires opportunities for extended practice with the guidance of a coach who can provide critiques of performance and suggestions for improvement. Such opportunities are not compatible with the typical structure of most preparation programs which rely more on didactic courses and group instruction.

The Alabama program does not have a clear conceptual design which integrates all of its modules. Although most of the modules deal with important aspects of the principal's work, students may experience modules regarding several different themes during the course of a day with no direct link between related modules and their generic themes. Further, conceptual issues and the treatment of practical, nuts and bolts topics are unevenly addressed among the various themes.

Lack of Program Structure and Coherence

Most administrator preparation programs are not "programs" at all, but a collection of discrete courses. Although these courses may be listed in a sequence, the fact is that students often take them in a random order based on factors such as car pools, convenience, and interest. The unrelated nature of the course work makes it difficult to plan sequenced and developmental learning objectives for students. Additionally, professors find it difficult to build course experiences upon instructional competencies which students are supposed to have mastered in previous courses. This lack of structure and coherence in many preparation programs makes it difficult to sequence clinical experiences throughout the program or relate specific skill development activities to a sequence of several courses. Because of these constraints, the clinical experience usually is a culminating internship in which the student is expected to apply all of the knowledge learned throughout the preparation program. In fact, however, most internships are not comprehensive experiences in which students apply a wide range of knowledge or develop comprehensive skills associated with effective administration. Internships are usually created on demand for a specific student often within the same district or even school in which the teacher is employed. They may consist of part-

time, before and after school duties and reflect the current problems or issues facing that school at a particular time rather than planned activities which help a student master specific skills as expected within the conceptual design of the preparation program.

Students in the Alabama program enroll as a cohort and proceed together through the summer courses and their internship. In this way the program appears to provide for a unifying instructional experience, except that, as has already been stated, there is no coordinating theme which integrates the various modules. The sustained interaction among members of the cohort helps develop a sense of camaraderie among the students and assists them in completing group oriented projects. The relationship between the knowledge component of the program and the skill-based competencies in the internship is more tenuous. The fact that the university course work takes place in the summer makes it difficult to find school sites for practical demonstrations and skill-related assignments. The structure of the skill and task assignments in the internship is also problematic. Not every module has a corresponding internship assignment, nor does every clinical site provide an opportunity for the student to complete all skill and tasks assignments. Since the internship is a culminating experience, all skills and tasks must be practiced long after its related instructional module was completed.

Arts and Science Concept of Professor

Clinical practice places unique demands upon professors which may be incompatible with university expectations regarding typical professional roles. The traditional professorial duties of teaching, research, and service are derived from an Arts and Science concept of the professorship. Most universities emphasize

research and teaching and define service as service to the academic community and professional organizations. Clinical activities requiring extensive off campus involvement are tolerated, but are neither encouraged nor rewarded. The professor who is interested in helping students master job-related skills soon finds that coaching students in skill development is more time consuming than lecturing, especially when done off campus at a clinical site. Faculty who spend considerable time in the field working with students may not have as much time to engage in scholarship. In addition, those professorial skills necessary to be an effective mentor may not necessarily be the same skills needed for conducting original inquiry and scholarship. The ability to be an effective mentor is ground in the mentor's personal experience of what constitutes effective professional practice as well as his or her ability to guide others in the examination of their own behavior. Further, the mentoring of skill acquisition is the most labor intensive form of instruction requiring small professor-to-student ratios. Such a clinical constraint may not be compatible with the university's assumptions about efficient class size and may be resisted by unit administrators who face credit hour production constraints.

Many of the modules within the Alabama program are taught by practicing administrators. The modularized format offers great flexibility in assigning staff and providing the students with opportunities to learn from successful practitioners. This format makes it more difficult to assign instructional load credit to regular faculty who may teach fewer modules than the equivalent of a regular course. In order to address the time and relevance problems already mentioned a retired superintendent has been hired to supervise the internship. This individual visits all of the interns and their mentor and conducts periodic seminars for the cohort. However, since the internship supervisor does not participate actively

in the summer academic program, the potential exists for a lack of continuity between the university experience and the internship.

School-Based Issues

Student Residence

Students are increasing less likely to pursue full-time study in their administrator preparation program. This is a potential problem if one assumes that preparation programs which include a substantial component of full time study can create more opportunities for clinical learning. When students attend discrete courses, taking only one at a time and usually at night, professors have few opportunities to create skill-based experiences or tie course objectives with practical experiences and assignments at a clinical site. The career path for many students make it very difficult for them to attend school full time or to participate in a full time clinical experience at sites other than their own school or district. Undergraduate teacher preparation, which is a prerequisite for admission to an administrator preparation program, usually leads teachers first to the classroom where in addition to gaining instructional experience they begin to establish roots in a community, job security in a particular district, and a substantial salary. Many states, such as Alabama, will pay for funded teacher units at the Master's level only if the student has received their Master's degree in their teaching field, thus leading teachers initially to pursue their advanced degree work in teacher education rather than administrator preparation.

Because of these career, family, and fiscal constraints students seeking entry into an administrator preparation program are more likely to attend a particular university because of its proximity than its reputation. Further, these students are increasingly dependent upon their incomes and are unable to leave the securi-

ty of their teaching position to pursue full time study at the university, especially when universities do not have adequate fellowship and/or assistantship stipends to compensate for the potential loss of income. The challenge of providing clinical experiences for these part time, place bound students makes it difficult to incorporate comprehensive skill acquisition in the preparation program.

Because students are not able to obtain paid released time from their districts, the course work in The University of Alabama program is held during the summer. This limits options for linking instructional modules and practical applications since clinical school sites are not available in the summer and the time frame for summer course work is compressed. The chief problem created by a lack of full time residence is the fact that the internship sites had to be made within the student's local district and most often within the student's school of employment. Additionally, this greatly restricts the placement of interns with outstanding administrative mentors. The original internship design which consisted of a full-time, one semester internship was abandoned since few districts would provide for paid released time for their teachers who were participating in the program. Consequently most of the students hold full time teaching positions and complete their internship assignments before or after school hours, during free periods, or during other non-instructional times.

District-level Professional Development

With the exception of some of the largest school districts, only a few have comprehensive administrator induction programs and programs designed to contribute to the continuing professional development of practicing administrators. The paucity of these programs places a unique burden upon universities which believe that they must provide complete and comprehensive preparation for the

student-administrator.

Administrator preparation in educational settings is not like the preparation of administrators for business. In business circles an M.B.A. is viewed as an entry level certificate. Students may pursue the M.B.A. immediately after completing an undergraduate degree and without any administrative experience. They may complete their degree without necessarily participating in a practicum or internship. The reason why M.B.A.'s are not more clinical is that most major employers have developed comprehensive induction programs for their aspiring administrators and continue to invest in administrator professional development throughout the administrator's career. The availability of site-based induction and training is based upon the assumption that universities can provide general preparation in the application of theories and concepts to administrative and organizational practice, but only the individual organization can help the administrator learn those skills which are consistent with the unique organizational culture and practice of the organization in which he or she will work. Thus, the university's program may teach business finance, but the newly hired manager will learn the specific financial techniques and practices which his firm will use in the company's management training program. The university may teach about the concepts of change and planning, but the organization will induct its new managers in the techniques and strategies by which they anticipate change and plan for the future. In addition corporations and others business regularly provide continuing professional development opportunities for their employees and especially their administrative personnel.

The availability of these induction and continuing development programs within the business community allows the university to concentrate upon concept and theory development and other aspects of administrator preparation which it

can do best. Since the university faculty understand that their programs are only the beginning of a planned series of continuing professional development activities for the prospective administrator, they need not worry with attempts to fit knowledge acquisition and skill development, concept development and their practical applications all within the preparation program.

Few school districts in Alabama have any formal administrator induction program. Most assume that the potential administrator has obtained the requisite learnings in his or her preparation program and can learn the rest on the job without outside assistance. This situation places a tremendous burden on the preparation program since students expect all of their academic experiences to be "practical" and provide them with the general knowledge and specific tools to be successful from the first day on the job. The University of Alabama program includes several practical modules which focus on topics such as specific computer applications, budgeting, routines for beginning the school year, and handling discipline. These modules do not address all of the practical responsibilities which are associated with the principalship, nor is there any attempt to accomplish such a goal. Yet the very fact that time is devoted to these topics means that other topics are excluded from the curriculum or treated with less depth. The issue is not so much whether the potential administrator needs to learn both conceptual and practical information, but that the lack of any follow-up administrator training, at the local school places an undue burden on the preparation program to be all things to all people. In the process of attempting to be both practical and conceptual, the program may in fact do neither well.

Sponsoring Potential Leadership

Few districts have comprehensive programs to promote potential adminis-

trators. In many states there is a shortage of certified administrators who are willing to relocate in order to obtain administrative positions. Districts in such a predicament must groom administrators from within their teacher ranks. Yet these districts often do not have sabbatical and leave policies which will provide assistance to these students as they seek preparation and certification. Superintendents may be afraid of pressure and/or law suits from individual teachers and teachers' associations when the district sponsors selected teachers for administrative preparation. In addition, most districts do not provide paid released time for students to participate in clinical experiences once they are enrolled in a preparation program.

Few districts in Alabama have sabbaticals or comprehensive leave policies. When The University of Alabama program was conceived, it was anticipated that superintendents, who had indicated that they were desperate for new administrator talent, would have been willing to nominate an outstanding teacher and support financially and logistically their participation in the summer course work and the full time internship. Superintendents were by and large unwilling to provide such sponsorship. Although most were willing to nominate an individual teacher, many feared political pressure from their teacher associations if they were to provide financial support. Most of the internships have become part-time placements in the intern's school building under the guidance of the intern's building principal, who may or may not be a model principal.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

This paper so far has discussed potential problems in establishing clinically-based administrator programs and has highlighted some of these problems by describing selected elements of The University of Alabama's Innovative Principal-

ship Program. Future clinical programs can be designed to be more effective if state boards of education, universities, local school administrators, and administrator professional associations address selected policy issues.

Provide Induction and Continuing Development for Administrators

Since local school districts have a vested interest in obtaining competent administrators who understand the theory of administration as well as are skilled in administrative practice, they must be willing to take a more active aggressive role in the preparation of administrators. School districts must develop policies and programs which recognize their responsibility to promote teachers to positions of leadership and support them in obtaining the appropriate preparation. Currently, the administrator selection process is operated on the basis of an open-market concept where individual teachers, on their own, earn appropriate administrator credentials and then seek employment. It is obvious that this system does not work well since fewer teachers are seeking administrative certification and those teachers who are certified as administrators are unwilling to seek employment outside of their local community. In the exercise of this important responsibility, school districts will have to face difficult political and financial problems. More specifically, school districts will need to establish procedures to:

1. Identify promising administrators from among the teaching ranks.
2. Provide appropriate released-time and financial support for teachers to pursue their administrative credentials.
3. Encourage administrators to accept their professional responsibility as administrative mentors and provide appropriate time for administrators to mentor administrative internships.
4. Provide full-time administrative internship positions.

5. Provide an administrator inductive program which makes use of school district resources, university resources, and programs from leadership academies and professional associations.

Develop Statewide Administrator Preparation Plan

Just as local school districts have a vested interest in the quality of administrators, so does the entire State. North Carolina is one of the few states which has a comprehensive statewide administrator preparation program which articulates unique roles for school districts, universities, and professional associations. Such plans must be developed if all of the resources available are to be coordinated to provide a comprehensive preparation program. States should fund administrative intern positions and university stipends so that individuals can undertake the financial burden and risk of seeking administrative credentials and employment. Further, leadership academies can supplement the training provided in university preparation programs and school district induction programs. States need to allow school districts to use state-funded teacher positions to support administrative interns. This logistical and financial support is especially critical if the profession is to encourage minorities to enter the field of administration.

Develop Consensus Regarding the Knowledge Base

School districts, professional associations, leadership academies, and universities must cooperate in exploring the breadth and scope of the knowledge base for educational administration. Each agency needs to identify their unique role in the preparation program and provide appropriate preservice, induction, or continuing education experiences for the lifelong preparation and continuing growth of school administrators. The potential knowledge base is so expansive that no

one agency can provide all of the preparation needed. The University cannot deal appropriately with concept and knowledge development and also provide detailed information regarding the myriad of day to day administrative tasks, especially when each district may use different techniques and procedures. It may be that local district programs are more appropriate for skill development training in which school district administrators learn their craft and develop personal skills for dealing with appropriate administrative situations and problems. Further, differentiation needs to be made regarding knowledge, skills, and concepts which are appropriate for the entry-level administrator and those which must be developed over time and through continuing educational experiences.

Explore Expanded Concepts of the Professorate

Universities need to reexamine their expectations for the professorial role. As programs seek to become more clinical in nature, models of the professor which deviate from the traditional arts and sciences concept need to be explored. Clinical professors are needed to coach and supervise administrative interns both at the university and in clinical sites. Positions such as these require the university to articulate different expectations for clinical faculty regarding scholarship and teaching. In order to attract qualified individuals to clinical professorships, the university may need to recognize the market-sensitive nature of such positions and find sufficient funding to entice experienced school administrators and supervisors. Such positions also have implications for decisions regarding tenure and promotion.

Summary

Unless universities, state departments of education, local school districts,

and other agencies can deal with the issues associated with clinically-based programs, clinical practice will not be fully integrated into the preparation programs for school administrators. The aims of clinical practice are indeed worthy and should result in the preparation of educational administrators who know not only how administrative problems should be handled, but will also have the skills to implement appropriate administrative solutions. For too long universities, school districts, and states have neglected clinical administrator preparation. As the administrators' role has become increasingly complex, so to has our understanding of the sophistication with which the preparation of school administrators must be attended.

The comprehensive academic and clinical preparation of administrators, however, cannot take place within existing structures. Universities and school districts alone do not have the resources nor the appropriate instructional sites to provide comprehensive preparation. Yet each of them, in cooperation with state departments of education and professional associations, have a unique and potentially relevant role to play in the administrator's development. States also have a vested interest in promoting outstanding qualified teachers to positions of school leadership. It is time that these agencies recognize the fact that they must martial the necessary financial resources and cooperate in the development of comprehensive clinical preparation programs for school administrators.

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